



American
Stroke
Association.
A division of the
American Heart Association.

Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA)

(su•do•bul•bar)

Causes

PBA is a result of neurological diseases such as stroke, dementia, traumatic brain injury and Parkinson's, and may result in losing control of emotions.

Disrupted signals in the brain lead to involuntary and sometimes inappropriate episodes of laughing, crying or angry outburst.

Symptoms

Sudden and uncontrollable episodes of anger, laughing, crying or all, with no clear cause.

"I know I shouldn't be laughing, but I just can't stop myself."

"I just lose control... I try to put it out of my mind, but I just can't."

INAPPROPRIATE:

PBA outbursts often don't match the situation in which they occur and generally don't reflect the way a person feels.

EXAGGERATED:

PBA outbursts of crying or laughing are more intense or last longer than appropriate for the situation.

PBA is sometimes referred to by other terms, such as emotional incontinence or pathological laughing and crying.



PBA is not depression

- They're similar, but different.
- When someone with PBA starts crying, it doesn't necessarily mean they're sad.
- Someone who has depression feels sad on the inside when they cry.
- A stroke survivor may have PBA and depression.

PBA		DEPRESSION
Crying, laughing, or both	EXTERNAL EXPRESSION	Crying
Neurologic disease or brain injury always present	UNDERLYING NEUROLOGIC CONDITIONS	May or may not have underlying neurologic disorder
Seconds to minutes; brief	DURATION OF EPISODE	Weeks to months; ongoing
Uncontrollable	CONTROL OF EPISODES	Maybe moderated or controlled
Exaggerated or doesn't match feelings inside	EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE	Emotions match mood of sadness inside
Outbursts have no specific link to underlying thoughts	ACCOMPANYING THOUGHTS	Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness

How to Manage PBA

BE OPEN

Let people know that you can't always control your crying or laughing because you have a neurologic condition.

DISTRACT YOURSELF

If you feel an episode coming, try to focus on something unrelated, or do something.

CHANGE BODY POSITIONS

Note the posture you take when you have an episode. When you think you're about to cry or laugh, change your position.

BREATHE/RELAX

Take slow, deep breaths until you're in control. Release the tension in your muscles that tense up during a PBA episode.



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Learn more at stroke.org